

# SHOULD PLYMOUTH'S SHOPPING CENTRE BE IMPROVED OR MODERNISED IN ANY WAY?

SECTION C: Individual Investigation

How Is The Land Use Changing And What Is The Impact Upon Settlements?

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## *Should Plymouth's Shopping Centre Be Improved Or Modernised In Any Way?*

### **Setting The Scene.**

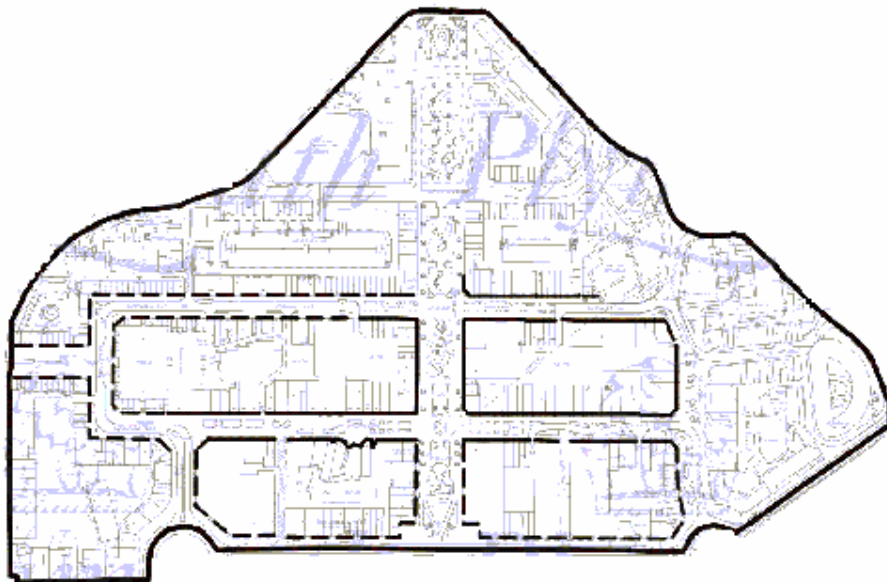
As we all know our world and it's cities are all changing rapidly and becoming newer, larger and more modernised to the time we are now living in. In this investigation I am looking at and trying to find out whether or not it's time for Plymouth's shopping centre to be improved or modernised in any way to fit the demands of it's residence and fit in with era of time we are living in.

This decision is being made about the local shopping area of Plymouth, a prime city of the southwest and one of the main reasons why people visit the city. Obviously changes have been suggested because the city is getting old and is slowly deteriorating. The various sites involved are those of nearly all the shops and buildings and some of the things that would involve the public such as roads and walkways and seating, whether there's enough of it and if it's in the right places. Also ideas have been suggested for those places that do not have easy access for the elderly. So in all it's the whole shopping area of Plymouth. There haven't actually been many alternatives put forward apart from that there is always the choice to leave it as it is.

### **Information Collected.**

To investigate this topic as fully as possible relevant information and data has had to be collected and is crucial, as this will decide the final answer to the question. The main piece of primary information/research I collected was the questionnaire, which consisted of 7 relatively simple and easy multi choice questions. I made 30 copies in total of these questionnaires and went into Plymouth to ask them to random, all aged people (over 12) of the public. The main aim of the questionnaire was to find out what the people who live in Plymouth think of it and their ideas and views on if it should be changed and how it could be changed. Another primary piece of information I collected were several photos of areas around the shopping centre. For these photos I wanted to stay as neutral as possible and not try to make them appear as if they are biased and show the area to be all good or all bad, so I took photos of good points and bad points about certain features within the shopping place.

The secondary information I collected was,



## Analysis Of Results.

Looking carefully at each of the graphs and the results tables from the questionnaire, I can see that each of them points to that Plymouth should be improved. Graph 1 showing whether people think the shopping area should be changed, shows very clearly that, Yes they think it should be. Nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  (73.3%) of the people think this and already this is a strong start to the issue. There was only 20% that thought it shouldn't be changed and a mere 6.7% who weren't entirely sure what they thought. However the majority of those who said yes were the elder people. This is probably because they may have lived in Plymouth longer and have seen it decline, or they have a better opinion and idea of what Plymouth's shopping standards could be or used to be. Anyway this has shown straight away the first thought that most of the people have about the area and will be supported by their later answers like in graph 2.

This shows the opinions on the shopping centre in Plymouth. Again in this bar chart there are clear results showing that the shopping centre could be better. Out of the 30 people 12 thought it was only satisfactory and 11 thought it was just good. Surprisingly not a single person thought it was excellent and there were 3 people who thought it was appalling. The graph shows that the 'satisfactory' block triples that of the 'very good' block. Taken from another question on the questionnaire, the people's main reasons for these opinions are because the area looks a state and all the buildings are dirty. A common complaint was about the shops and that there aren't enough childcare goods and products and that the shops don't always provide what the people need. Also, a reason was that there aren't enough accessible areas for the elderly, which seems to be a rising problem in many places. Again, this graph and these reasons show that in the public's eyes that the area isn't good enough and that something should be done.

Moving on to graph 3, it shows how the residence, think it should be changed and these are only the ideas of those that thought that Plymouth should be changed. Straight away I can see that the top three points picked were that buildings should be reconstructed, there should be better access for the elderly and that there should be more shops and that basically means that they want more shops that sell the range of goods that they want. Co-incidentally these top three improvements picked are also the most common complaints about why the shopping centre should be changed. Below this are the ideas of having a more scenic look with 5 votes, having more public seating with 8 votes and having better roads and walkways with 6 votes. This obviously shows that there is no real problem with the amount of seating as there is plenty already and that there is plenty of greenery planted and arranged nicely to hide all the brick and concrete. On the other hand though there is still the issue about the buildings the lack of variety of goods sold in shops and the small amount of accessible areas for the elderly, which is appearing to be what the shopping centre's main problem is and needs to sort out. The results for a question asking about the disadvantages and advantages if the shopping centre were to be improved showed that there were more advantages than disadvantages and so from this it suggests that it would be better if Plymouth were changed as the advantages would be that it would improve Plymouth's economy and will attract more tourists. Also there would be more jobs available and Plymouth would look a lot tidier and more attractive and that the area will have more pride and get a better name for itself. The only relevant disadvantages mentioned were that Plymouth might lose its character and things could become more expensive.

Finally, graph 4 shows how long the public would be willing to wait if changes have been certified. This graph isn't so clear as each amount of time has a similar amount of votes for it, but the most common waiting length was 2-5 years, which had 30% of the votes. This would actually give plenty of time to arrange the plans etc and get the builders or what's needed and then begin work. The next most popular length of time was 1-3 months with 23.3% of the votes, so you can see how close the figures are. However even though the percentage of votes is quite close, the lengths in time are actually a long way apart from each other and this is because whilst interviewing the people a lot of them made comments on the council's response on the work to be done and so knowing this they mostly went for 2-5 years or over 6 years.

So, from looking at all of the results I have also noticed that different groups of people do feel differently about the situation and the proposals. I've noticed that the younger ones of about 12 to 16 don't really think much of what happens, as most of them are happy with the shops and the way it is. Others think that there should be more shops, but I think that this is because they are bored of the shops that are here now and they want to see something new for a change. Apart from the shop issue it seemed they didn't have much to say about anything else. The young adults of 21 and upwards had slightly different views but they too thought that Plymouth was absolutely fine, although they had seen better shopping areas when they've visited other cities like Exeter. A lot of them also thought that the buildings did have to be sorted out as they are looking dirty and run down. Finally it was the elder people of 30 -35 up to 60 and above that had the views on what had to be changed. This would be because they have been here longer and they have seen it deteriorate. They mostly commented on the lack of variety in shops and some of the much older men and women commented on how the roads and walkways weren't cleaned and looked after enough, which is why they are covered in chewing gum and other litter. It is the older people that want to see the shopping centre changed the most and relatively quickly.

### **Conclusion**

For the issue to be resolved I think firstly that the shopping centre has to be carefully assessed on its state of condition and how much it will cost to make it so that it will meet the public's demands. I do accept that some work has already been started on improving it like reconstructing buildings like the Armada Centre but from studying all of the work I have done up to here I can clearly conclude that I think Plymouth's shopping centre should definitely be improved a lot more. After seeing people's views on the area and looking at photos I think it needs improving more than it needs modernising and that eventually it can look really good and have lots more visitors and tourists. In the long run it will probably be worth it and it could benefit the whole of Plymouth by becoming much more popular.

### **Evaluation.**

I feel that this whole investigation has gone pretty smoothly. In general most of it went well and I was able to collect the information that I wanted with no trouble such as the photos. However the questionnaire was the only information that I had to collect that didn't always go to plan. This was because with some people I would go to walk up to them and they would walk straight past me when I was speaking to them as they thought I was trying to sell something. A lot of people queried if I was selling something so eventually I changed what I said to them when I approached them. After I had done this it was a lot easier.

If I were to do the investigation again I think I would definitely change the approach I use on people when asking them my questionnaire as I have already said. I would also like to change some of the questions in the questionnaire or add new ones to see if this would make a difference. This is because if different age groups have a different opinion on the matter then maybe the different genders think differently about it as well, so it would be interesting to see what everybody thinks. Also I think it would have been better if I had perhaps interviewed someone in the Plymouth council to see if anything has already been suggested and to ask them a separate questionnaire to find out whether they think it needs improving or not. I would also do the same for the businesses in the shopping area and I would aim to find out what they think and if it has affected their business in any way over the last couple of years. This way my investigation would be more thorough and stronger. I would also consider asking more people the questionnaire if I were to do this again as this would give more reliable results. I would probably ask about 100 people all around the shopping area.

When collecting my information/sources I did try to make them as unbiased as possible like the photos where I have shown the good points and the bad points of the shopping centre. I think the photos collected are valid as they are proof of the state that Plymouth is in at the

moment and that improvements are being made and have been made. The questionnaire is also very valid as it shows the public's opinion and views. However with the questionnaire it wasn't as fair as it could have been because I can remember asking a lot more women than men the questions. I did pick the people as randomly as possible and at whatever age they were but above 12 (this is because I thought people above this age would have a better idea of what exactly I'm asking them whereas below this they may not.) Also a lot of the people didn't really know Plymouth as well as others and so they didn't know what to think. Others didn't actually live in Plymouth and so their immediate thought was that where they lived was much better.

Some alternative conclusions that could be drawn are, that it's just mainly the buildings that need changing to make the area better as everything else didn't rate so highly as a problem. Otherwise I can't think of any other conclusions because there was only really the yes or no option to the question.

For my investigation to be extended I think it would be very good if I went back into Plymouth at a much later date after changes have been made. I would ask the public another questionnaire on what they think of the improvements made and if it is what they expected it to turn out like. This way I will know if their demands have been satisfied, the shopping centre is more useful to them and if further improvements still need to be done. I know that it wouldn't be the same people as before so I could perhaps ask them a question on what they thought of Plymouth's shopping centre before it was changed and then what they think of it now that the changes have been made.

I think mainly the Plymouth council would be very interested in reading my report as it would show them what is happening now amongst the people and that the shopping centre needs to be improved. If they decide to make changes they could use my report as a basis for an assessment on what needs to be done and what the various outcomes and advantages would be for them and the shopping area.

